

**Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe**

*Commissioner & Adjutant General*

[www.DMVA.Alaska.Gov](http://www.DMVA.Alaska.Gov)



**Alaska National Guard**

*Department of Military  
and Veterans Affairs*

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

**STATE OF ALASKA**

**PRESS RELEASE**

#MvaWeb

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

21-019

**March 5, 2021**

By Edward Eagerton

*Joint Force Headquarters*

## **Alaska National Guardsmen return from deployment to Poland**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** — Approximately 80 Alaska Army National Guardsmen from the 297th Regional Support Group returned here Thursday night after a nine-month deployment to Poland in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve.

U.S. Army Europe and Africa has led the Department of Defense's Atlantic Resolve land efforts by rotating U.S.-based units to Europe since 2014. There are approximately 6,000 regionally allocated Soldiers participating in nine-month Atlantic Resolve rotations at any given time.

There are four types of U.S. Army Atlantic Resolve rotations – armored, aviation, sustainment task force and division headquarters. Rotational units conduct bilateral, joint and multinational training events across more than a dozen countries. Atlantic Resolve is funded by the European Deterrence Initiative, which enables the U.S. to enhance deterrence, increase readiness and support NATO.

"Our mission was to provide base support operations for thousands of Soldiers from the rotational army forces in Poland," said Col. Matthew Schell, commander of the 297th Regional Support Group.

The Alaska Guard's mission entailed the coordination or management of base security, dining facilities, living quarters, showers, laundry, latrines, gyms, and recreation spaces at 11 forward operating sites through host nation agreement and contracted services, he explained.

1st Lt. Balinda O'Neal Dresel, Forward Operating Site Swietoszow mayor, 297th Regional Support Group, was appointed as the mayor for one of the 11 forward operating sites, and she explained that each of the sites had their own unique challenges.

"Some sites are a tent city that are less dependent on the host nation for operations," explained O'Neal Dresel. "FOS Swietoszow is a key logistical hub that is located on a Polish armed forces installation, and the majority of our tasks were coordinated with the 10th Armored Cavalry Brigade. My team worked hand-in-hand with their civil-military cooperation or S-5 section."

O'Neal Dresel said that one of the highlights of her deployment was meeting Gen. James C. McConville, the chief of staff of the Army, and explaining their role of providing basic life-sustaining needs to the

-more-

rotational forces at Swietoszow.

“My team not only provided food, water and lodging,” she said, “but also helped monitor large-scale projects and oversaw contract services for laundry, gym, and morale, welfare, and recreation operations. We basically ran a hotel for troops coming from all over central and eastern Europe. My team worked hard to ensure the best care for Soldiers stationed at and coming in and out of the FOS.”

Amidst the deployment, the COVID-19 pandemic was in full effect across the world, and Schell explained that his unit rose to the occasion.

“Maintaining all base operations functions across Poland during a pandemic was a huge accomplishment,” said Schell. “We anticipated the challenge of establishing COVID-19 mitigation and response measures in Poland. We worked with our supporting medical company to establish testing protocols and procedures.”

According to Schell, the officers in charge of each location prepared for isolation of Soldiers diagnosed with the disease and the quarantine of their close contacts. Each location’s plan accounted for medical monitoring, food, laundry, and hygiene for all affected personnel.

“Despite the strain on resources,” he added, “the 297th RSG showed outstanding patience and agility in responding to the pandemic without interruption of any services that our Soldiers rely on.”

Schell said that the 297th RSG has been a part of the Alaska National Guard for only five years, and that this mobilization was the unit’s first, and served as a benefit not only to the Guard’s federal mission, but also to their state mission.

“Our time in Poland represents valuable experience that didn’t exist in Alaska until we took this challenge,” he said. “The 297th RSG is now better prepared to respond to state emergencies or federal deployments.”

In fact, their efforts were so well received, they helped extend the mission of Atlantic Resolve to neighboring countries.

“Not only did we help plan the support of Defender 2021 exercises in the Balkan countries of Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania,” Schell said, “we also expanded the base support operations mission by initiating support of Atlantic Resolve sites in Lithuania and Latvia based on our success in Poland.”

Schell said this was a good opportunity for company grade officers to learn from.

“We had people in 11 different sites,” he said. “This experience was good for these officers by empowering them to make decisions, and the way we adapted to things like COVID-19 was super, and it was a great experience to be given that level of autonomy and trust. They performed well, and I was proud of our Soldiers’ professionalism and cooperation with our allies in solving problems every day.”

###

**Photo, video and story links, next page**

## Photos and Video

DVIDS link includes selected full-resolution photos. (Accessible from military computers.)

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/390733/alaska-national-guardsmen-return-deployment-polandational>  
Guardsmen return from deployment to Poland (dvidshub.net)

